

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Identify and correct errors in pronoun-antecedent agreement in number, gender, and person
- Write with clear agreement between pronouns and their antecedents

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

You will need photocopies for students of:

- **Student Lesson Summary**, p. 71
- **Practice Worksheets**, Levels A and B, pp. 72–73
- **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 74

Teach

1. **Introducing Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement:** Write the sentence on the board as an example of a pronoun and its antecedent.

EXAMPLE When Oscar got off the leash, he ran for the squirrel.

- Then have a volunteer circle, or name, the word in the sentence that is a **pronoun**. (*he*)
 - Ask: How can you tell that the word you circled is a pronoun? (*It is a word that replaces, or refers back to a noun—Oscar.*)
 - Ask: Who or what does *he* refer to? (*Oscar, a dog*)
 - Explain that in the example, *Oscar*, is the antecedent to *he*. You might have students recall the meanings of the word parts “ante” (before) and “cede” (to go). Then, explain that every pronoun in students’ writing must have a clear, readily identifiable **antecedent**, a noun or pronoun that the pronoun replaces.
2. **Teaching Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement.** Distribute the **Lesson Summary**. Go over the definitions in **Academic Vocabulary**, making sure students understand the concepts of antecedent, number, gender, and person. Go over the rules for making a pronoun agree with the noun it replaces. Review the rules and the examples as follows:
 - **Agreement in Number:** In the examples, have students name the antecedent for each pronoun. (*The pronoun its refers to zoo, their refers to keepers.*)
 - **Agreement in Person:** Point out that the antecedent of a pronoun may be another pronoun. Remind the class that careless use of the pronoun *you* is a frequent error in student writing.
 - **Agreement in Gender:** Explain that it once was the custom in English to use the pronoun *he* in referring to any singular noun or pronoun when the gender was not clear. Explain, that customs change, and that the use of *he* as non-gender specific is now rarely used because it excludes women. Stress that when a phrase such as *she and he* or *his and her* sounds awkward or labored, students can revise a sentence so that the antecedent is plural. They can also alternate between *she* and *he* or replace pronouns with actual nouns—a *student*, an *adult*, such a *person*, *one*—when appropriate. Point out the example in **Step 5**.

PRONOUN-ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT, CONTINUED

3. Guided Practice: Write each of the sentences below on the board. Then do the following activities.

- In each sentence have a student volunteer circle the pronoun.
- Have another volunteer underline and explain the antecedent to which the pronoun refers.
- Then have a third volunteer explain what is wrong with the sentence and correct it.

EXAMPLES

In the aviary, colorful birds preen its feathers.

Zoo visitors are enthusiastic when you see the big cats.

The designer of an exhibit must give his project careful thought.

(Sample: The singular pronoun its does not agree in number with the antecedent birds: “In the aviary, colorful birds preen their feathers.” The pronoun you is in the second person, but a third-person pronoun is required to agree with the antecedent visitors: “Zoo visitors are enthusiastic when they see the big cats.” The antecedent designer could be masculine or feminine: “The designer of an exhibit must give his or her project careful thought.” OR “Designers of exhibits must give their projects careful thought.”)

QUICK CHECK. Ask students to write or discuss answers to the following questions:

1. Can you name a pronoun that is first person, plural, masculine? Explain. *(Sample: You can't, because all first person pronouns—singular and plural—I, me, we, us, ours, mine, etc.—are neutral gendered.)*
2. Can you name a pronoun that is third person, singular, feminine? Explain. *(Sample: yes, she, her, hers, herself.)*
3. Write a sentence in which a second person pronoun refers back to the antecedent “This class.” *(Sample: This class has worked so hard that you deserve a break.)*

Practice and Apply

Activities involving pronoun-antecedent agreement appear on pp. 72–73.

- Assign **Practice Worksheet A** to students who need more structured activities.
- Assign **Practice Worksheet B** to grade-level or above-level students.

Sample Answers: Practice Worksheet A

1. *Chimpanzees raised in captivity cannot survive on their own in the wild.*
2. *People have donated their time and money to build chimpanzee shelters in Africa*
3. *C*
4. *In the wild, a baby chimp might nurse from his or her mother for as long as five years.*
5. *At the shelters, baby chimps receive their milk from bottles.*
6. *Each caretaker, as part of his or her job, must teach the chimps new survival skills.*
7. *After one female chimp had lived for years in a cage, she had to learn how to climb trees.*
8. *When a male orphan became sick, he lost all his hair.*

PRONOUN-ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT, CONTINUED

9. *People named him Uruhara. They named him for an African word that means “bald.”*

10. C

Sample Answers: Practice Worksheet B

1. *Raising sheep is a difficult task, and it often involves humans and dogs working together.*
2. *Herd dogs and their puppies combine their efforts to move sheep from one pasture to another.*

3. C

4. *Neither rain nor snow prevents good herding dogs from doing their job.*

5. *The shepherd has two ways of communicating with a herding dog: he or she can whistle or speak.*

6–10. *Shepherding dogs are especially attentive when **they** hear two spoken commands: “Come by” and “That’ll do.” The shepherd’s job becomes much easier when **he or she** is assisted by a good herding dog. Prices for a well-trained animal vary a great deal, but **they** may range into the hundreds of dollars. Shepherds and farmers agree that the cost is worth every penny. The love and attention of a herding dog for **its** owner are marvelous to see!*

Assess and Reteach

Use these guidelines to determine if students need the **Reteaching Worksheet**.

- **Practice Worksheet A:** Students should correctly answer at least nine items. Their changes do not have to match exactly those of the samples.
- **Practice Worksheet B:** Students should correctly answer at least four of items 1–5 and should correct at least three of the four basic errors in pronoun-antecedent agreement in items 6–10. Their changes do not have to match exactly those of the samples.

For students who need reteaching, review the **Student Lesson Summary**. Focus on the definitions in **Academic Vocabulary** and relate them to the items on **Practice Worksheet A**. Then have students complete the **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 74.

Sample Answers: Reteaching Worksheet

1. *her* 2. *it* 3. *they themb* 4. *c* 5. *a* 6. *d* 7. *a* 8. *d*